

House Republican Press Release

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Scribner Opposes Flawed Campaign Reform Bill



Brookfield Legislator Assails Measure as an Expensive Hoax

HARTFORD- State Representative David Scribner (R-Brookfield) voted in opposition of a campaign finance reform bill in the early hours of the morning December 1st, following over eight hours of debate in the state senate, and seven hours of debate in the state house. Scribner dismissed the legislation as a “carefully crafted sham raiding the General Fund.”

During the regular session of the Connecticut General Assembly, both the House and Senate passed differing forms of campaign finance reform bills, both purporting to remove special interest money from the election process. No agreement was reached before the adjournment of the session, and Governor M. Jodi Rell assembled a task force to hammer out details for a reform bill, and called the legislature into special session to address the issue.

“There are a phenomenal amount of loopholes, gimmicks, and inequities in this bill rendering it a complete failure in the stated goal of cleaning up government,” said Representative Scribner.

Scribner noted that the bill will take a minimum of \$20 million from the General Fund every year to pay for the campaigns of those running for Governor or other constitutional offices, state house and state senate. Such expenditures would blast through the spending cap. “This bill takes taxpayers’ money that would pay for essential public services, such as education or transportation, and paying for campaigns with it,” said Scribner. “The proponents of this bill are saying that your tax dollars, which might have gone to pay for school books, will be better spent on their bumper stickers and campaign buttons.”

Scribner noted other major flaws in the bill, including provisions that make it tougher for third party candidates to qualify for public financing, unfairly strengthens party committees, and limits the Constitutional free speech rights of a number of individuals.

“There are no guidelines to spending in this bill,” said Representative Scribner. “Abuses such as the one perpetrated by former state senator Ernest Newton, where he funneled campaign cash to friends and associates, would now be an abuse of taxpayers’ money. Nothing in this bill would have prevented the scandals of former Governor Rowland, Mayor Joe Ganim, or Senator Newton. Those individuals were corrupt, took bribes and broke laws, so they are facing the penalty. This bill does nothing to stop it.”

Scribner was critical of the effective date, which isn't until December of 2006. "The caucus PACs have an entire year and another full election cycle before they have to comply with any of this," said Scribner. "They will all be racing to stuff their coffers as full of cash as possible, abusing the current system as much as possible before the time is up."

Notably absent from the reform measure, according to Scribner, was any reference to labor unions. "Curiously, we are making no change to the power and influence of labor unions with this bill," he said. "If we are limiting what businesses and contractors can do in the political process, why aren't we also limiting what labor unions can do? Labor unions are apparently the only special interest Democrats want to preserve, which is partisan and self-serving."

Scribner added that the bill protects incumbents, allows campaign money to be diverted to get around various rules. "It's absurd to call this reform," said Scribner.

The bill passed the House 82-65, and will head to the desk of Governor M. Jodi Rell, who is expected to sign it.